

REMARKS

Applicants would like to express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided. Upon entry of the present paper, the Abstract will have been replaced, claims 2-15 and 17-23 will have been amended, and claims 1 and 16 will have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, with claims 2-15 and 17-23 pending in the present application. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections in the present application. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate.

The Examiner has objected to the abstract, requesting submission of a shorter abstract. In compliance with the Examiner's request, Applicant has submitted a new abstract, and requests withdrawal of this objection.

The Examiner has rejected claims 1, 3, 16, 18 and 23 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over SAITOH in view of HOTTA. The Examiner has also rejected claims 15 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over SAITOH in view of HOTTA and further in view of KUMAGAI.

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication of the allowability of claims 2, 4-14, 17 and 19-22. In this regard, solely in order to advance the prosecution of the present application, Applicant has written claims 2 and 17 into independent and allowable form (generally incorporating the limitations of the claims from which they depend), which should not be taken as an acquiescence by Applicant as to the propriety of the rejection. Further, Applicant expressly reserves the right to submit claims of a related scope in another application. With respect to rejected claims 3 and 15, these claims have been amended to depend from amended independent claim 2, and are thus now allowable.

Applicant further notes that the amendments made to the other pending claims have been made to reflect the amendments made to independent claims 1 or 17 and/or for clarification purposes. For example, the claims have been amended to eliminate "means-plus-function" terminology and to change "said" to ---the---.

With respect to the Examiner's rejection of dependent claims 3 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), since these claims are dependent from one of independent claims 2 and 17, which are allowable for at least the reasons discussed *supra*, these dependent claims are also allowable for at least these reasons. With respect to claim 23, applicants have generally incorporated the limitations from allowable claim 8 into this claim, and thus, this claim is also allowable. Further, all claims recite additional features which further define the present invention over the references of record.

Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that each and every pending claim of the present application meets the requirements for patentability at least under 35 U.S.C. § 103, and respectfully request the Examiner to indicate the allowance of each and every pending claim in the present application.

COMMENTS ON STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR THE INDICATION OF
ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

In response to the Statement of Reasons for the Indication of Allowable Subject Matter, mailed by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on August 20, 2008, along with the above-noted Official Action, Applicant wishes to clarify the record with respect to the basis for patentability of the allowable claim in the present application. In this regard, while Applicant does not disagree with the Examiner's indications that certain identified features are not disclosed by the prior art references, as noted by the Examiner, Applicant further wishes to clarify that the independent claims in the present application recite a particular combination of features, and the basis for patentability of each of these claims is further based on the particular totality of the features recited therein. The dependent claims set forth additional bases for their patentability in accordance with their recited limitations as well as in accordance with the particular limitations of the respective base claims.

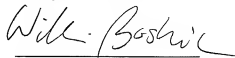
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In view of the fact that none of the art of record, whether considered alone, or in any proper combination thereof, discloses the present invention, reconsideration of the Examiner's action and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested and are believed to be appropriate.

Applicants note that this amendment is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance, and should not be considered as surrendering equivalents of the territory between the claims prior to the present amendment and the amended claims. Further, no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejection is made by the present amendment. All other amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should there be any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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